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JULY - SEPTEMBER 2014

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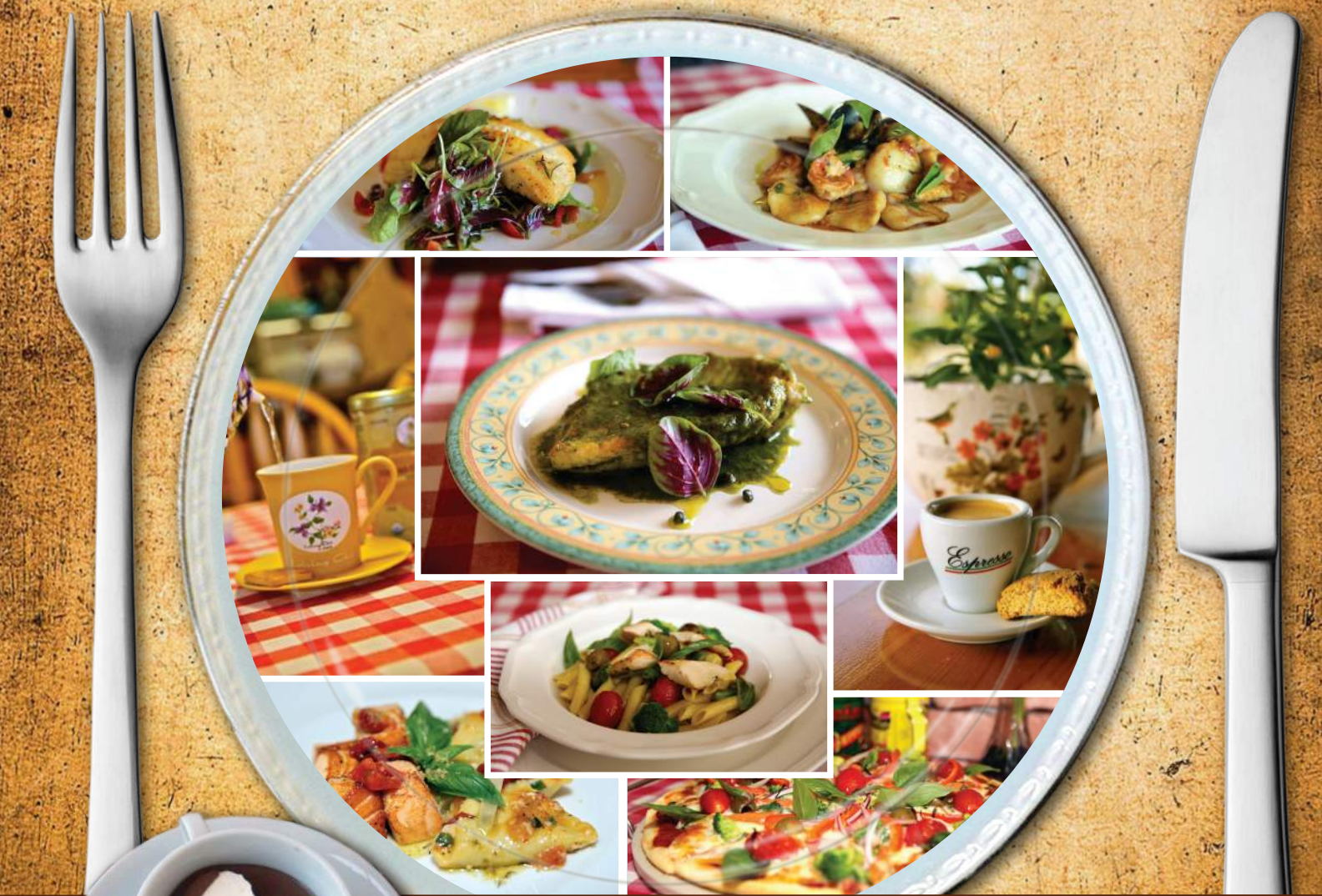

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For an island comprising just 44.55 square miles (really, just a dot against the immense expanse of the Pacific Ocean), Saipan is chock-a-block with basketball courts—43 at last count. And that doesn't include the privately owned ones that are not accessible to the public). That speaks volumes of the islanders' passion for basketball. Yet it is also a passion that seems to have waned in recent years, judging by the neglected state of many of these basketball courts. A lot don't have rings anymore, bleachers have fallen into disrepair, and perimeter fences either appear to be breeding ground for tetanus as convenient clotheslines and drying racks. Many of these courts were built during the halcyon days of the '80s and '90s, when the Commonwealth had booming tourism and garment industries and people's pockets were flush with cash. Not anymore, and that is reflected in many of these derelict courts. Now the Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands is looking at reviving the defunct Islandwide Village Youth Basketball League and that's where all these basketball courts will come into play. ***See story on Page 20***

The House of Representatives recently honored KSPN 2 news director Bob Coldeen for his more than 20 years of sports coverage on the islands. And it looks like he's good to go for another 20, teaching another generation to shout out the inevitable question: "Did you get that, Bob?" TAGA *Sports* did a short profile on this giant of the local sporting scene and you can read about it on ***Page 12.***

Student Athletes of the Year awardees Kensuke Kimura and Carol Lee are living embodiments of the work-hard-play-hard school of thought, both of them outstanding students who are also exceptional athletes in their fields. As they explained to TAGA *Sports*, all it takes is hard work, discipline, and the loving support of their parents and mentors. And, of course, a generous dollop of talent. Read all about how they've managed it so far on ***Page 16.***

Finally, for those who think pig farming is quite a stretch for a sports magazine, think again. Contributing writer Jim Rayphand gives a tongue-in-cheek yet earnest argument that working at a farm at a young age gives one lifelong lessons that one brings not just to the playing field but also for the rest of one's life. I should know, I was a farm boy myself. It was backbreaking work but it also gave me my first lesson in time management, as I had to do all the farm chores before going to school, and then do them again after I get off classes. Yes, I hated it but, well, I did learn how to do it all fast so I never get late for school.

We hope you'll enjoy reading this latest edition of TAGA *Sports*. Email me at editor@saipantribune.com for comments, suggestions, or violent reactions.

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
Editor

COVER ART
Kensuke Kimura practices his butterfly stroke at the Kan Pacific swimming pool in Marpi.

Photography by
ROSELYN MONROYO

TAGA SPORTS

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WRITERS' BLOC

KAISAANDERSON

Kaisa is the Registered Dietitian for CNMI Public School System Food and Nutrition Services. She has a passion for teaching nutrition and loves learning about the exotic fruits and vegetables on the island. She loves playing tennis when she can find a partner that is a beginner like herself.

ROSELYNMONROYO

Roselyn begged off from playing college basketball, afraid that she would not be able to graduate on time due to the high demand for time to train and compete. Now, after learning how Carol and Kensuke managed to stay focused in sports while maintaining their good standing in school, she is finally convinced that being a successful student and athlete is possible.

MARKRABAGO

Mark enjoyed reporting about the Islandwide Village Youth Basketball League when he covered sports for the *Saipan Tribune* in the mid-2000s. Among the over 40 courts on Saipan, he has used the JP Center and Civic Center basketball courts the most. He is currently suiting up for the *Saipan Tribune*/Realty Management Services team in Tan Holdings' inter-company league.

JIMRAYPHAND

A self-proclaimed "jack-of-all trades, but master of none," Jim aspires to be a subsistence pig farmer. At present, he moonlights as a daily Pig Food Collector for a small conglomerate of wealthy pig owners who, despite initial concerns about hiring someone so ripe in years, laud him as the best "slop-man" they have ever known.

Email letters to the editor to editor@saipantribune.com or mail to PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan MP 96950. Submissions to TAGA *Sports* must include the writer's name, village address (no P.O. boxes), and daytime phone or mobile number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity and may be published or used in any medium. All submissions become the property of the publication and will not be returned.

YOUR HEALTH

THE WAR ON SUGAR

the movies, magazines, talk shows, and the news are telling you the truth about one thing: sugar is not part of a balanced, healthy diet

KAISA ANDERSON, RD
Contributing Writer

Recently, the topic of sugar in our diets and food has become popular. The topic has always been there, but it seems to be in the spotlight again. A documentary was recently released called *Fed Up*. The movie focuses on the sugar content in our diets and how the food industry has hidden sugar in 80 percent of our foods. Though well made, unfortunately the movie doesn't tell us anything we don't already know. We have known for ages that too much sugar in our diets is not beneficial. We also know that large food companies will continue to sell sugary products, no matter how unhealthy they are for us. Yet we still consume and buy these products. We even find artificial sweeteners and "healthy" sugar substitutes such as coconut sugar, agave nectar, stevia, and natural honey to satisfy that sweet tooth craving.

However, I am so sorry to break the bad news to you. The movies, magazines, talk shows, and the news are telling you the truth about one thing: sugar is not part of a balanced, healthy diet. On the other hand they are also lying to you about "healthy" or "alternative" sweeteners. There is one thing to understand—there is no such thing called a "healthy" sugar. Period. Let's get the facts straight about what sugar is, how it reacts in your body, and how much is recommended to maintain a healthy diet.

ALL SUGAR IS SUGAR

Let me explain. Sugars can be natural (honey, coconut sugar, agave), refined/processed (white sugar, high fructose corn syrup), or be chemically altered proteins that taste sweet, also known as artificial sweeteners (aspartame). But regardless of the origin—natural, processed, or the artificial sweetener—sugars have similar effects on your brain and how your body responds to them. One study looked at the consumption of different types

SEE **PAGE 6**

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of sugar by athletes; all triggered the reward sector of the brain for these participants. In addition, the movie *Fed Up* pointed out a study where the region of the brain related to drug/opiate addiction is activated with the consumption of sugar. The movie went on to compare sugar as addictive, similar to cocaine, to drive the effect of how unhealthy it is, but also fails to mention that study was conducted on rats. My point is, though there are small differences in chemical composition of different sugars, sugar is sugar. Different sugars affect your brain the same way because you enjoy the sweet taste. But remember, too much of a good thing is not good for you.

THE SCIENCE OF SUGAR

I am going to get a little sciencey for a minute. When I say "sugar" I am talking about two simple sugars in the chemistry world: glucose and fructose. Currently there is a big debate on what is the "healthier" sugar, or the sugar that is a "better choice." And I am here to tell you, they both have their benefits and disadvantages to your health.

Glucose is the main source of energy to your brain; your brain primarily chooses glucose as its form of food. Glucose may be your body's first choice of energy, but it also greatly affects your hormones. It spikes your insulin, which can provide instant energy, but will eventually store as fat when excess amounts are consumed leading to weight gain.

On the other hand, fructose has less effect on insulin, is digested in the liver, and fails to communicate with your brain that you feel full, which can lead to overeating. Not to mention recent studies have found fructose may increase "bad" cholesterol, raise uric acid levels (which can worsen symptoms of gout), and may increase insulin resistance, which may lead to Type II diabetes. Lastly, you need to know that some of the "healthy" sugars such as agave nectar are higher in fructose than table sugar. Meaning, "healthy" sugars are just as capable of side effects of high fructose corn syrup in large quantities. Overall, it's a matter of picking your "poison."

IS SUGAR EVIL?

So you may be asking the question, is sugar evil? The answer is NO! Sugar is not evil, but it must be realized that by consuming too much or consuming other forms of sugar claimed to be healthy is not necessarily good for you.

The *Fed Up* movie promotes a challenge of cutting out added sugar (refined and artificial) from the diet for 10 days. I have to admit, I have done a similar challenge before and I did learn a lot. I learned that denying yourself of the foods you love and fighting the cravings of sugar can make a person quite irritable. Nevertheless, it did help me sleep more soundly and rid me of my 2:00 afternoon energy crash. It also helped me realize that foods are typically too sugary for my taste after the challenge was over, and that I do consume too many foods with added sugar. I found alternatives such as dried fruit (without added sugar), no sugar added apple cider, and fresh fruits were just as satisfying when I had cravings for sweet foods.

MODERATION IS KEY

The key to this information is that sugar should be consumed in small conservative amounts. Whether the sugar is claimed as "healthy" coconut sugar or it's the high fructose corn syrup in your favorite candy bar, it needs to be cut back—drastically. On average, each American consumes 100 lbs of sugar individually each year. The consumption of sugar should be decreased and eaten in moderation.

I want to clearly define moderation when talking about sugar consumption. The World Health Organization recommends 10 percent of calories can come from sugar, while the American Heart Association says 100 calories for women from sugar (6 teaspoons), and 150 calories for men (9 teaspoons) per day. Not very much, so how do you cut back? Buy the good stuff that is homemade and picked out of your garden or neighboring farm. Get back to basics and back to foods from the earth. I encourage you to try the 10-day challenge of no added sugar or artificial sweeteners to your food. See how you do and what you learn. Good luck!

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PETER PRESTLEY

ROSELYN MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

For someone who did not have good biking skills to start with, Peter Prestley has become one of the most competitive triathletes in the CNMI. His victories in XTERRA Saipan and other local races, stint in the XTERRA World Championships, and recent runner-up finish in the 2014 Guam National Championships and Pacific Islands Championships Triathlon prove he has become a force to reckon with.

TAGA *Sports* talked to Prestley to find out how he achieved the significant improvement in the sport he earlier gave up on because of the too much time involved in training.

Have you always been into sports?

I grew up playing team sports like baseball, soccer, football, hockey, and even lacrosse. In high school, I was the captain of the cross country team and had some success in regional running competitions. After high school, I sort of took a hiatus from organized sports, however. At that time, I was really only interested in snowboarding. I did enter a couple of triathlons about 10 years ago, but decided to give it up because the training took too much time. Right before I moved to Saipan, I was living in San Diego, and spent all of my free time surfing.

What was the first sport you played or tried on Saipan?

When I first got to Saipan in 2008, I was almost immediately invited to join three soccer leagues. I hadn't played soccer since I was about 10 years old, but ended up joining the co-ed and mens' leagues for a while. I did okay, but certainly didn't win any awards. Eventually, I got tired of sacrificing every Sunday to soccer games, especially when the wind is good and I can be kiteboarding.

Why triathlon? Which leg do you like the most? What's your least favorite and how do you motivate yourself to achieve a decent time in your least favorite part of the race?

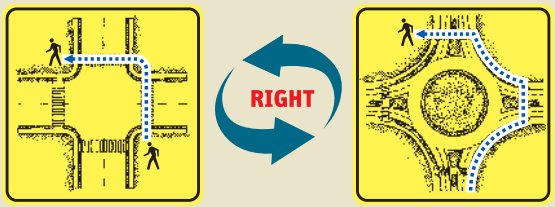
In 2011, one of my co-workers encouraged me to buy a mountain bikeb so that we could join the XTERRA. We did a little training, but he ended up leaving island. I still participated in the race in 2012. It almost killed me, but I was fortunate enough to qualify for the World Championship in Maui. I figured I might not have another

SEE PAGE 10

Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety/Back to School

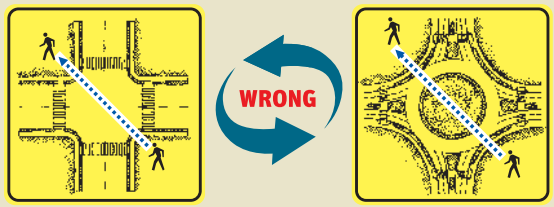
Awareness Month

August 01 – 31, 2014



Pedestrians Make Safe Choices!

Don't forget, only cross in crosswalks!



FAMILY SAFETY RULES FOR BICYCLE RIDING

Follow these rules when you ride your bicycle:

- Always wear a bicycle helmet—every time you ride!
- Ride on the right, in the same direction as other vehicles. The bicycle is a vehicle. Bicyclists and drivers follow the same rules of the road!
- Ride a bicycle that fits you and has working parts.
- Always ride with at least one hand on the handlebars.
- Obey all traffic laws, signs, and signals.
- Be visible. Wear bright clothing and reflective materials during the day.
- If you have to ride at night, you must have white headlight in the front and red lights or reflectors on the back of your bike. Reflective material on your clothing, helmet, backpack, is helpful at dusk, dawn, in bad weather or at night.
- Always pay attention to traffic. Never use headphones or talk on cell phone while you bike.
- Avoid dangers in the road.

Follow these rules when driving around bicyclists:

- Obey all signs and signals.
- Bicyclists are allowed to ride on the roadway unless there is a sign that says no bicycles.
- Stop, wait, or pass bicycles as you would a car.

BICYCLISTS MAKE SAFE CHOICES!

Bicycles in the roadway are considered vehicles.

Bicyclists ages 10 and older should bicycle like a vehicle, on the street, in the same direction as other traffic and follow the same rules.

Sidewalks were designed for pedestrians. If you bicycle on the sidewalk:

- **Bicycle slowly and give pedestrians the right of way.**
- **Don't bike into Grandma or baby brother in hisstroller.**
- **Follow the rules for pedestrians.**
  - Stop before crossing the street from a sidewalk to give motorists time to see you.
  - Make sure turning motorists see you by making eye contact.
  - Cross the road by walking your bicycle in the crosswalk just like a pedestrian.

GETTING TO SCHOOL SAFELY

By Walking — Crossing the Street

1. Walk to school with a group of kids and always have a responsible adult walk with you.
2. Always walk on the sidewalk if one is available.
3. If no sidewalk is available, walk facing the traffic.
4. The safest place to cross is at a street corner or intersection.
5. If you are 10 years old or younger, you need to cross the street with an adult. You should not cross by yourself. Ask an adult to tell you who can help you cross the street.
6. Before you step off the curb to cross the street, stop and look left-right-left to see if cars are coming. Do you know your left from your right? If you do, that is great! If you don't, here is a hint: when you hold your left hand up, your thumb and first finger will make the letter "L," and that stands for "left."
7. When no cars are coming, it is safe for you and an adult to cross. But look left-right-left as you do it, and hold the adult's hand.

By Riding Your Bicycle

1. The best and smartest bicycle riders always wear their bicycle helmets! They know that bicycle helmets will keep their heads and brains safe. Are you one of the best and smartest riders?
2. Ask an adult to make sure that your helmet fits correctly. The helmet should fit low on your forehead so that two fingers fit between it and your eyebrows. Another way to check is to put the helmet on your head and look up. If you can't see your helmet, it is too far back.
3. To ride safely, you need to know the rules of the road. Do you know what "the rules of the road" are for bicycles? If you don't, then you should not ride in traffic or without an adult.
4. When you ride your bicycle, wearing a helmet helps to keep you safe. You should also wear bright colors during the day, and right before the sun rises or sets. This makes it easier for drivers to see you, and that helps to keep you safe, too.

EVERYONE IS A PEDESTRIAN!

Whenever you are not in your vehicle, you are a pedestrian!

WHEN YOU ARE WALKING

- Be predictable. Follow the rules of the road and obey signs and signals.
- Walk on sidewalks whenever they are available.
- If there is no sidewalk, walk facing traffic and as far from traffic as possible.
- Keep alert at all times; don't be distracted by electronic devices that take your eyes (and ears) off the road.
- Cross streets at crosswalks or intersections whenever possible. This is where drivers expect pedestrians.
  - Look for cars in all directions – including those turning left or right.
- If a crosswalk or intersection is not available, locate a well-lit area where you have the best view of traffic. Wait for a gap in traffic that allows you enough time to cross safely, and continue to watch for traffic as you cross.
- Never assume a driver sees you. Make eye contact with drivers as they approach you to make sure you are seen.
- Be visible at all times. Wear bright clothing during the day, and wear reflective materials or use a flashlight at night.
- Watch for cars entering or exiting driveways, or backing up in parking lots.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs when walking; they impair your abilities and judgment too.

WHEN YOU ARE DRIVING

- Look out for pedestrians everywhere, at all times. Safety is a shared responsibility.
- Use extra caution when driving in hard-to-see conditions, such as nighttime or in bad weather.
- Slow down and be prepared to stop when turning or otherwise entering a crosswalk.
- Yield to pedestrians in crosswalks and stop well back from the crosswalk to give other vehicles an opportunity to see the crossing pedestrians so they can stop too.
- Never pass vehicles stopped at a crosswalk. There may be people crossing that you can't see.
- Never drive under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Follow the speed limit, especially around people on the street.
- Follow slower speed limits in school zones and in neighborhoods where there are children present.
- Be extra cautious when backing up – pedestrians can move into your path.

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chance to compete at that level so I decided to go. That's basically when I decided to take my training more seriously. I didn't really have any bike skills, but started riding with Lewie Tenorio and Bob Ferrer on weekends. Those guys basically taught me how to mountain bike. I also started swimming the tanks on my lunch breaks. I think swimming has been the most difficult thing for me to learn to do well. In Maui, I realized how important the swim leg is. For example, that race has a ton of single-track. With 800-plus participants, you need to get out of the water and onto the bike leg quickly because the bike course can become a traffic jam. I try to swim at least three times a week.

Your best time of the day to train?

To get ready for a triathlon, you really need to train at least twice a day because there are three sports to practice. For me, this means that training in the early morning is critical. If I miss my opportunity in the morning, the phone starts ringing and there is a good chance the day will be wasted. I usually wake up around 5am to bike or run. Mornings are also nice because the temperature is cooler. Sometimes I can get in a swim instead of taking a lunch break, but otherwise I try to get in a second training session after work before it gets dark.

The best course for training?

We're blessed on Saipan to have a place like Marpi for training. There are a lot of good trails up there for mountain biking and running. There's also a group that swims at Pau Pau in the early mornings when the tide is right.

Have you had a bad crash while biking? Where and how did it happen? How long did it take you to recover?

Crashing is definitely a part of mountain biking, at least for me! I had a memorable crash during the XTERRA Championships in Maui last year. I was biking down a really steep section of the single-track with a bunch of riders chomping at the bit behind me. The trail was really dry and dusty, and I was going way too fast to make any kind of turn. Toward the bottom, where there was a turn, I locked up my brakes and was skidding out of control when my front tire hit a root. I ended up somersaulting over my handlebars butt first and into a tree. It was awesome. I kind of had too much adrenaline to feel any pain until after the race. The worst part was just losing my water bottles because the course was broiling hot.

Road or MTB race?

I like both. I currently have a road bike and a mountain bike. I converted my road bike into a tri bike for triathlon events by adding aero bars and pushing the seat forward, though I'm shopping for a dedicated tri bike right now. I'm pretty addicted. I really like the speed and power of road biking, and the technical challenges of riding trails on MTB.

The toughest race you did?

So far, the toughest race for me was XTERRA Maui last year, mostly because of the heat. That race doesn't start until 8am, so by 10 the sun is full blast. Technically, though, the XTERRA Saipan bike course is a bit more challenging. Our course has lots of different terrain, including steep climbs, single-track, jeep roads, rock gardens, grassy sections, etc. The pros all say that we have one of the most challenging XTERRA bike courses.

Any food you like to eat after a hard race or a long training?

After a hard race or training, I try to replenish myself by eating carbs, especially lots of fruits, or maybe potatoes if it's dinner time. Drinking fresh coconut water also makes me feel better. They sell fresh coconut water at the Tuesday and Thursday street markets.

If you're not hooked to triathlon, what sport would you be doing?

My favorite sport is still kiteboarding. If there is good wind, I will go kiteboarding instead of training for triathlon any day. I love the feeling of gliding over the water at high speed on pure wind power. This is my third year kiteboarding and I'm finally getting good enough to launch some airs. It's a really challenging sport to learn, but really fun once you get the hang of it.

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SPORTS CALENDAR

JULY

Saipan Fishermen Association's International Fishing Tournament: Over 50 boats from Tinian, Saipan, Rota, and Guam are expected to join in the two-day fishing derby that will award a whopping $10,000 to the crew that will surpass the event's heaviest catch, a 942-lb marlin

EAFF 2015 East Asian Cup Preliminary Round: The CNMI's men's and women's national football teams will be competing against Mongolia, host Guam, and Macau for the right to advance to the next round of the East Asian Football Federation-sanctioned tournament next year.

8th Micronesian Games: Around 100 CNMI delegates will be in Pohnpei to challenge the host, Guam, Chuuk, Palau, the Marshall Islands, and Kosrae in the multi-sport quadrennial event.

AUGUST

2014 Tournament of Champions: The best golfers on the island will challenge visiting players from Guam, Korea, Japan, China, and U.S. mainland in six different flights.

2014 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships: This annual tournament held in Fiji will have 10 CNMI junior tennis players suiting up for the North Pacific Team and meeting the representatives of the East and West squads in U12, U14, and U16 singles and doubles events.

2014 Philippine Bowling Association Budweiser Classified Tournament: The island's top bowlers compete in three divisions, Class A, B, and C with female keglers mixing it up against their male counterparts.

SEPTEMBER

MISO Boys Volleyball and Girls Basketball League: The high school players in the CNMI battle for the boys volleyball and girls basketball championships of the 2014-2015 season of the Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization.

23rd Annual Saipan Rotary Club Youth Basketball League: The longest-running youth basketball league in the CNMI will feature the up and coming players in the Commonwealth.

2014 Shirley's Badminton Classic: This is Northern Marianas Badminton Association's third signature event for the season and will have competitions in the singles and doubles divisions.

This advertisement is sponsored by Tan Siu Lin Foundation

KSPN news director Bob Coldeen interviews CNMI women's national team goalie Neeka Atalig.

MARK RABAGO

BOB GETS IT!

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

"Did you get that, Bob?" is an oft-repeated phrase whenever Bob Coldeen is around with his camera covering local sports.

But even before becoming Saipan No. 1 sports anchor, Bob Coldeen already made a name for himself on the island's sports scene whether as a competitor on the field or as an announcer and an organizer off it.

He suited up for the Department of Education softball team beginning in 1979 and was on the team that won the 1985 edition of the Islandwide Men's Softball League.

Coldeen also suited up for the inaugural season of Saipan's Major League Baseball.

The future KSPN 2 news director also was a member of the 1986 Micronesian Softball Tournament Organizing Committee and the 1988 Mobil Games Organizing Committee and was part of the CNMI delegation to the Mobil Games in Palau and Guam.

The University of Florida alumnus also coached the Capitol Hill Tigers in the Saipan Little League in 1997 and was a member of Saipan Major League Baseball from 1998 to 2008 where he held various positions, including president and vice president.

In 2001, Coldeen coached the CNMI Junior League Team to the championship of the Asia Pacific Tournament and a berth in the 2001 Junior League World Series in Taylor, Michigan.

EDUCATION FIRST

Coldeen first came to Saipan in July 1973 for a special education meeting and four years later was packing his bags en route to Rota to teach at Rota High School. He made the move to Saipan in 1980 and the rest is history.

"I decided to stay because I thought it was a good place to raise a family," he told TAGA *Sports*.

After retiring as an educator in 1993, Coldeen was hired to anchor the sports segment of KMCV 7.

"I was the first person to be invited to be KMCV sports anchor because I was usually the announcer at ball games and people like my style and enthusiasm. I started sports journalism in 1993 with television."

He is the first to admit that he's not an exceptional athlete. He, however, always had a passion for sports growing up in Florida.

"I played all sports growing up. I wasn't great in anything. My best was as a sandlot football quarterback, and also especially good in softball and frisbee. I liked the Los Angeles Dodgers in baseball because my dad took me to their games, Boston Celtics in basketball because of their excellence, Green Bay Packers in football because of their tradition, and all University of Florida Gator sports because I was a Florida boy."

TV PERSONALITY

Coldeen and other local TV news anchors are the closest things to TV personalities on island.

In the more than 20 years covering local sports, he only needed to tweak his style of broadcasting once or twice because of the evolving times.

"I changed the way I cover sports. I stopped doing national sports because they're being done extensively by other networks. I now concentrate on local sports because that's what people here enjoy. My shows haven't changed that much because I try to make each one interesting, funny, or at least entertaining."

The most memorable game he covered was the 2006 Micronesian Games baseball gold medal game won by the CNMI against Guam. During that game almost everyone and his cousin on the island watched the game either from the makeshift stands or a few feet from the fences surrounding the Francisco "Tan'ko" C. Palacios Baseball Field.

The 2006 baseball gold was sweeter because that year's Micro Games was held on Saipan and came at the expense of archrival Guam, which has battled the CNMI for baseball supremacy for the longest time.

Of all the sports personalities he interviewed, Olympic gold medalist and AVP pro Phil Dalhauser is on top of Coldeen's list.

"The most interesting sports personality I have interviewed is Phil Dalhauser because between the four times he was on my show, he went from being a rookie to the world's No. 1 beach volleyball player."

Although he holds the title of news director and occasionally substitutes for news anchors on vacation or on assignment, Coldeen said he would never trade his sports cap for the news anchor's desk permanently.

"Covering sports is better than news because sports should be fun and news can be bad and sad. The biggest challenge in covering local sports is to be fresh and energetic and motivated every single day."

Coldeen's advice to any sports journalists: Follow your passion and have fun with the English language. Never take yourself too seriously but take your job seriously. TS

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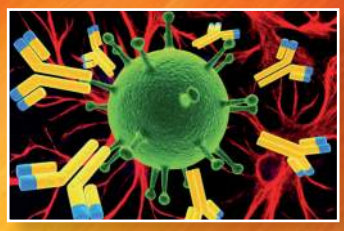

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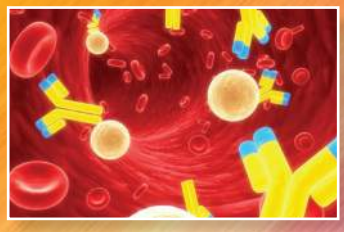

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HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Surviving the

ROSELYN MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

It is tough being a student or an athlete by itself but imagine if you're both.

TAGA *Sports* recently sat down with Kensuke Kimura and Carol Lee, recipients of the 2013 NMSA/TSL Foundation Student Athletes of the Year awards early this year, to learn how they labored to succeed in sports while staying on track with their studies.

Both enumerated some of the things they do on a regular basis as student-athletes. These include going to practice after school, doing homework after training, staying up late to catch up with lessons missed during off-island tournaments, missing special occasions, and competing and training on weekends that are meant for relaxing. The list could go on but regardless of how many challenges student-athletes like Kimura and Lee face, what counts is how they manage to go though these and still excel in both fields.

KIMURA

"Honestly, it's really hard for me to stay focused on studying and swimming at the same time. Getting back home after practice every day never made me motivated to do my studies, but then with all the support I got from my parents, teachers, and friends, I managed to make it through during my high school years," said Kimura, who graduated from Grace Christian Academy last month.

In his four years with GCA, he missed several classes when he had to go to Japan, Australia, Turkey, Spain, and recently New Zealand to represent the CNMI in international competitions. In New Zealand, he was the lone CNMI swimmer to join the 2014 Oceania Swimming Championships and he reset three national records there while bringing home one bronze medal. There were times when off-island tournaments were scheduled on exam weeks, so Ken had to take the test early.

"For the exams, I take it before I leave for competition. I had a choice between taking it before or after but I chose before since I can get away from it and just focus on my race," said Kimura, who still got As in his subjects.

"I was able to go off-island and miss school without any problems because my school was really supportive. They understood my situation. If I missed something during the class or I am going off-island, I either get it from my teachers in advance or do every single missing work when I come back from competition. I just spend extra hours working on it on weekends."

Kimura happened to be the president of his class, too.

LEE

If Kimura had to work extra hours on weekends to make up for missed lessons, Lee was tasked to do special projects.

"I had to make a pyramid in 3D and put all the decorations, while talking about Egypt. For the missed lessons, sometimes I have to sleep late (between 12am and 1am) during

life of student-athletes

school days and weekends and wake up at about 4am to do other homework," said Lee, who is now moving to junior high school after completing grade school at Garapan Elementary School.

Lee, who received the Mallard Proficient Award, Inspirational Speech Award, and Mallard Advance Award at GES, needed to make extra effort in school this year, as she missed the first few weeks of school when she went to Australia in January and returned there three months later. She was part of the elite Pacific Oceania Touring Team that competed in various tournaments in Australia.

LESSONS IN INDEPENDENCE

Although it is nice to see different places, both Lee and Kimura admit that life is never easy when you're away.

"You do stuff on your own, prepare the things you need for practice and competition. You feel the pressure more because you're not swimming only for yourself but also for others back home," the Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center member said.

"I had to travel by myself before meeting Ayana Rengiil from Palau in Guam and we traveled together. I got sick when we were in Cairns and thankfully her aunt gave me medicine and I got better days before the tournament," said Lee, who learned to become independent when she began competing off-island.

She prepares all her tennis equipment hours before the tournament, does the laundry of her tennis uniform, and sets the time she's supposed to wake up for the match. Her parents used to do all that for her back on Saipan.

MISSED OCCASIONS

Another challenge student-athletes face when competing off-island is not celebrating holidays or other important occasions with their families.

Since she started competing in off-island tournaments in 2012, Carol has spent one New Year in Australia and a birthday and Christmas in New Zealand.

"In 2012, I celebrated my birthday (Dec. 21) in New Zealand. During my break and while other players were playing, my new friends from New Zealand started singing the happy birthday song using the microphone from the match announcement booth. I felt happy and surprised when I heard my name after the song," said this 12-year-old undefeated champion in the 2013 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships.

Meeting new friends from other countries helps Carol survive time away from her family.

Ken, on the other hand, takes with him a gift from his mother Yuko, every time he leaves Saipan.

"It's actually my lucky charm—the omamori. It's a traditional Japanese charm that I received from my mom when I was 10. It looks really old, so the quality may be poor but this charm definitely gets my hopes up every race," Ken said.

NOT DONE YET

Despite the tough and extraordinary life they experience as student-athletes, both Kimura and Lee are dead set in their goal to attain both academic and athletic excellence.

Kimura is moving to Japan and hopes to get accepted at Chukyo University, one of the schools with the strongest and biggest

swimming team in Japan.

"If I get accepted and make the team, I dream of cutting the qualifying time to Japan National Championships. Qualifying for that makes my time closer to Olympic qualify time. I hope I can make that during my four years of college," Kimura said.

Lee has yet to choose where to go for her junior high school years, but vowed to match if not double the work she has shown while enrolled at GES to her next school. She also keeps her door open to a possible training stint in Australia. Last year after dominating the POJC in Fiji, Lee caught the eye of ITF Director of Development Frank Couraud. The ITF official is planning to build a special training program for top players in the Pacific in Australia and is considering Lee to be part of the select group.

ROSELYNMONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

As the CNMI competes in two regional tournaments this month, McDonald's takes pride in being part of sports programs that help discover talents.

The Commonwealth will be participating in the 8th Micronesian Games in Pohnpei and the 2014 Asia Pacific Regional Baseball Tournament in the Philippines, fielding teams in athletics and Little League—the two programs McDonald's supports.

McDonald's is the title sponsor of the All Schools Track and Field Championships that produced Micronesia's fastest woman Yvonne Bennett, CNMI record holder Tyrone Omar, and others who represented the Commonwealth in different international and regional competitions. McDonald also has a team in the Saipan Little League Baseball and for about a decade several players from the squad had suited up for the CNMI in the Asia Pacific competition and even the Little League World Series. The Little League players eventually moved up to adult leagues and some were selected for the CNMI Team, a perennial contender in the baseball event in the Micro Games.

"With our sponsorship of athletics competitions and Little League, we basically help provide venues or opportunities for kids to cultivate their talents, which they could later use to help the CNMI in off-island competitions," McDonald's Joe Ayuyu Jr. said. "It's a win-win situation—we help them [athletes] and they help the CNMI by playing and winning for our islands."

McDonald's assistance to the two programs started in the early 2000s, according to McDonald's Saipan president Joe Ayuyu Sr., and they were just happy to lend a hand to sports federations that are financially struggling.

"The [Northern Marianas Athletics and Little League] came to us and made presentations. Before, we used to sponsor the entire Saipan Little League, then just one team, as other companies also stepped up and sponsored teams. We saw there are many children benefiting from the two programs so we decided to continue supporting them," the older Ayuyu said. "The more children we see playing, the more active and healthy people the CNMI will have."

One Little League squad has around 20 players and last year's Saipan Little League drew 31 teams, while the All Schools track meet lured about 500 in the actual competitions and more than 1,000 in the qualifiers.

WHAT WE'RE MADE OF

Besides getting more children involved in sports, the McDonald's president also goes for characteristics one develops through these programs.

"You see a team that is made up of a coach with strong leadership and players with discipline, teamwork, and confidence. These are

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The management team of McDonald's Saipan poses for a group photo at their office in Dandan.

the tools that they can use not only in sports but also in life. We at McDonald's, like these teams and players, work together and follow our leaders to achieve one common goal."

Before sponsoring a program or a team, McDonald's needs to get commitment from its leader.

"It's not enough that you start the program, you have to be there all throughout. I remember asking a coach if he is going to be there every game because if we will commit to the team, we also want the full commitment of its leaders," he said.

Joe Sr. wishes more parents would support their children. He believes a player's confidence go up a notch if he or she sees their folk cheering them on in the sidelines or even dropping and picking them up during games and practices.

"It's a shared responsibility for coaches and parents. Parents may have a tough time supporting their children financially, but there are other ways to support them," he said.

LOVIN' IT

Joe Sr. is glad to see the teams and sports federations McDonald's supports triumph, but he believes competition is not all about winning.

"It's seeing improvement. I love seeing a player who in his first year in Little League almost always missed at-bat. The following year, he is hitting consistently," he said.

Joe's wife and McDonald's general manager Marcia notes the enthusiasm of young athletes.

"I saw them running barefoot at the track, not minding the hot surface. They stayed at the track and field facility almost the entire day, patiently waiting for their events, competing in one race after another. Then when it's time to award the winners and I gave them their medals, they gave me a smile. It's a wonderful feeling knowing that they were thankful you appreciated their efforts at the end of the day. Some even wear their medals after the tournament had concluded," Marcia said.

Joe Jr. joined her mother in the presentation of awards for the All Schools meet for the first time this year and what he saw made him admire the young but determined student-athletes.

"There was a boys' high school team, I think from Saipan Southern High School, that joined the tournament without a coach. I was told they were a bunch of friends and classmates who encouraged each other just to try out in the qualifying tournaments. They ended up getting the championship in the division, beating many-time champion Marianas High School and a strong Kagman High School. When the winning team was announced, I will never forget the look of surprise and at the same time happiness on their faces," the younger Ayuyu said.

HOOPS

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

There are a total of 43 open and covered basketball courts on Saipan. According to the 2010 Census, the island had a population of some 48,000. That means the capital of the CNMI has a basketball court for every 1,116 residents.

For Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands vice president Elias Rangamar, 43 sounds just about right.

"Forty-three courts around the island. Is it enough? I think so, seeing that some of them are not really being used. It just shows how much basketball was popular on the island."

Before the advent of Facebook, online games, and other electronic devices that tend to keep children indoors instead of outdoors, neighborhood basketball courts were the *de facto* youth centers of their era.

"That was how the kids in the villages hang out and stuff back then. The trend has kind of changed," said Rangamar, who is also a program coordinator of the Northern Marianas Sports Association.

If the youth do play basketball nowadays it's usually at the more centrally located venues like the Gualo Rai and Garapan basketball courts and even the all-weather confines of the Gilbert C. Ada, Marianas High School, and Gillette Multipurpose gymnasiums.

Rising gas prices, however, have given parents of basketball players from far-flung villages like Kagman, Tanapag, and As Matuis some second thoughts about allowing their children to join these organized hoops competitions.

"The situation with the gas can be an opportunity for us to bring basketball back to the villages," Rangamar believes.

That's where reviving the defunct Islandwide Village Youth Basketball League comes into play.

During its heyday, the IVYBL was the grassroots program of BANMI and catered to players not eligible yet for the Rotary Youth Basketball League, which is for teenage boys.

"We run basketball programs and identified all the basketball courts on island because we hope to revive the Islandwide Village Youth Basketball League and also get the kids in the villages active. It's been dormant since the mid-2000s," said Rangamar.

The Department of Public Works, through a $10,000 appropriation

from the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation, has already given BANMI an important assist by giving some of the major basketball courts on island a facelift, with new backboards and rings and much needed repair to the bleachers and perimeter fences.

DPW Secretary Martin Sablan said his agency is only helping the Legislature tidy up the facilities. He, however, said that sports and outdoor activities are important to the overall health of the local community.

Getting individuals to coach and mentor players at the grassroots level is the next step.

"I think the kids out there still want to play because they come in and shoot around the basketball court. It's just that there's no adult to organize practices, games, and leagues. That's one of our challenges. We need to come out and develop more coaches on the different villages because it's easier for them as well," Rangamar said.

The key is involving adults in organizing basketball games at the village level. "If you're from Chalan Kanoa, you go to CK because you're right there instead of having someone from Kagman coach. We're trying to recruit coaches and divide Saipan into three zones."

BANMI's vision can also get a further boost if the many basketball courts that dot the island are installed with lights for nighttime games.

"All of them have the capability of having lights; they just need to be assessed and rewired. One good thing about the basketball courts, especially if there are lights, is kids can play there from morning until night," said Rangamar.

That's where the private sector's help could come in, as the BANMI official said the maintenance and cost of lighting village basketball courts shouldn't fall solely on the hands of government.

"You have to give ownership to the village or the precinct. They should set up clubs to take care of their basketball courts. They can also ask businesses to sponsor the basketball courts to keep it maintained and help with the use of the lights."

Rangamar said the number of all-weather basketball courts on islands could also be augmented if BANMI or NMSA can somehow acquire the support beams of old garment factories and abandoned warehouses and then recycle them for new covered courts.

If all goes well and according to plan, Saipan as a hoops island can someday become a hoops heaven once again. TS

ISLAND

1 AS MATUIS COURT

2 SAN ROQUE FIRE STATION COURT

3 TANAPAG COURT

4 CAPITOL HILL COURT

5 WHISPERING PALMS SCHOOL COURT

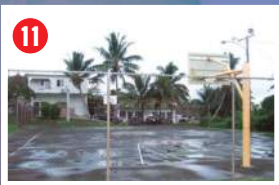
6 NAVY HILL COURT

7 GARAPAN COURT

8 CHINA TOWN COURT

9 JP CENTRE COURT

10 CMS COURT



11 GUALO RAI COURT

12 GILLETTE MULTIPURPOSE GYM

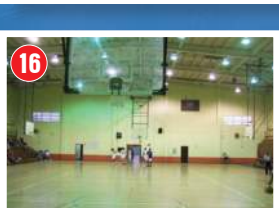
13 OLEAI SCHOOL COURT

14 SAN JOSE CHURCH COURT

15a MHS GYM COURT 1

15b MHS COURT 2

15c MHS COURT 3



16 ADA GYM

17 CIVIC CENTER COURT

18 SUSUPE COURT

19 SAIPAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL COURT

BASKETBALL COURTS ON SAIPAN

SOURCE: **BANMI**

MT. CARMEL COURT

CHALAN KANOA DISTRICT COURT

CHALAN KANOA BARRACKS COURT

CHALAN KANOA DISTRICT 2 COURT

CHALAN KANOA DISTRICT 3 COURT

CHALAN KANOA DISTRICT 4 COURT

HOPWOOD JR. HIGH CHALAN COURT

HOPWOOD HS CHALAN PIAO 1 COURT

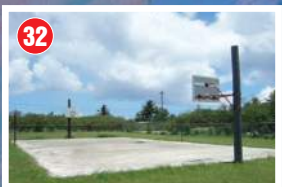
SAN ANTONIO COURT

SAN ANTONIO ELEM. SCHOOL COURT

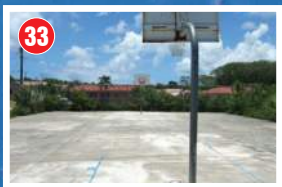
KOBLER HOUSING COURT

KOBLERVILLE COURT

SOUTHERN HS COURT



KOBLERVILLE LEMENTARY COURT

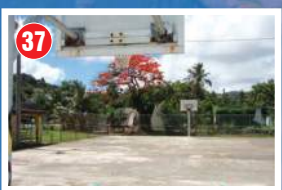


TOTOTVILLE COURT

NMC COURT

DANDAN COURT

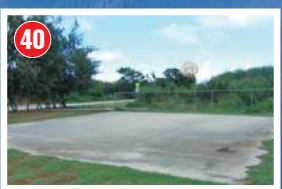
DANDAN ELEMENTARY 1/2 COURT



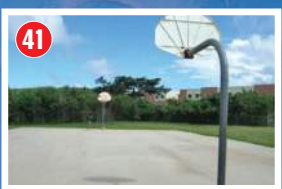
SAN VICENTE COURT

SAN VICENTE ELEM. SCHOOL COURT

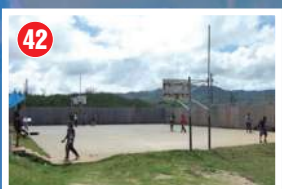
CHACHA COURTS-KAGMAN



KAGMAN COMMUNITY CENTRE COURT



KAGMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COURT



KAGMAN HIGH SCHOOL COURT

KAGMAN COURT

Cosino's Saipan gamble pays off

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

Vedasto "Ed" Cosino was already being paid the equivalent of $250 a month in Philippine pesos in 1983 when he suited up for ESQ Marketing in the semi-professional and now defunct Philippine Amateur Basketball League.

Back then, as a 19-year-old, he had dreams of making it to Asia's first play-for-pay league, the Philippines Basketball Association.

Those lofty ambitions, however, got sidetracked when the 6'3" backup center sustained a foot injury.

"All players dreamt of joining the PBA. But after I turned 27 years old and coming from an injury, I realized it wasn't for me," he told TAGA *Sports* in Tagalog.

By 1989 Cosino found himself in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, after being recruited by one of Saipan's construction companies.

After stepping out of the airplane and seeing the small airport and then the dirt roads, Cosino was shocked and muttered to himself, "Is this really U.S. soil?"

Saipan has always been an acquired taste for newcomers. Luckily for Cosino, he had basketball to keep him busy.

During the day, he would work in RB Electrical's purchasing department, but three or four times a week he would play for the company's basketball team, which came to dominate all the leagues—whether all-Filipino or open—on Saipan.

A natural center with a shooting stroke of a guard, Cosino was an instant hit on Saipan while also suiting up for the FT-SNE and Toyota Wheels powerhouse teams of the early 1990s.

Some of members of the two teams Cosino played for were former PBA player Ricardo "Joy" Cleofas, Danny Bicera, who is now based in Manila, and the late Rick Alegre, a heady guard and former CNMI national player.

"I was named to several mythical teams and always topped the scoring, rebounding, and shot block categories. The only categories I didn't get to top were steals and assists," he said.

His lone MVP award came in the mid-1990s in a Budweiser-sponsored league.

Aside from taking home the Best Center awards of almost every league he joined, Cosino also occasionally won the Best Three-Point Shooter plum.

"Back then I played with another 6'3" guy who could play center that allowed me to be a forward and shoot from outside."

Among the locally bred players Cosino dueled with, the ones who stood out for him were Joe Tudela, because of his heft and size, and the Diaz brothers—Tony and Ed—due to their overall basketball skills.

Cosino would also play for the Tony Sablan-coached Verizon teams in the late 1990s and early 2000. That team went on to basically own the 35-and-over masters league with the likes of Richard "Doc" Brostrom, Dado Vistal, Frank Iglecias, Elmer Pineda, and Jack and Felix Palacios in its lineup.

He also had stints with SMF Shell, Visminda, and other notable teams in the UFO Inter-Organizational Basketball League.

Cosino counts the time when he went up against a team bannered by Abong Camacho as his most unforgettable game on Saipan.

"I was fouled by Abong with no time to go, with us down by 1 point. I made two pressure-packed free throws to win the game, to the disappointment of the opposing team's fans."

Last season, Cosino played in the UFO 40-and-over Masters Basketball League. He still showed some glimpses of his old dominating self with strong pivot moves, block shots galore, and sharp passing from the interior.

The 50-year-old, however, is the first to admit he's already past his prime. A day after a game, his knees would usually swell up, making it hard for him do his job at Conwood Products Inc., where he is a supervisor.

JUST TALL

Cosino said he didn't particularly like basketball growing up and only got into the sport when the governor of Rizal, a province near the Philippine capital of Manila, recruited all the young 6-footers of the province.

They were housed in one compound and were given free food, clothing, and other amenities while being trained in the rudiments of basketball.

Before long Cosino became a force to be reck-

oned with and even played against future PBA Hall of Famer Allan Caidic in championships in inter-village leagues.

After suiting up for the *Palarong Pambansa* (National Games), Cosino was signed by ESQ Marketing in the PABL in 1983.

With future PBA players Sonny Cabatu, Epoy Jalmasco, Ricky Cui, Jojo Villapando, and Cresencio "Dondon" Ampalayo among his teammates, Cosino won three championships with ESQ Marketing.

He said he primarily relieved Cabatu, future PBA Rookie of the Year, and remembers his coach's instructions, which is once he gets the offensive rebound he should always throw it to sharpshooters Cui and Villapando.

After ESQ Marketing, Cosino continued to toil in the PABL with teams like PYH Giants, Crispa Lhuillier, and even Sta. Lucia Realty and played with more future PBA players like Ato Agustin, Jack Tanuan, Peter Aguilar, Jojo Lastimosa, and Harmon Cordinera.

Latching up to Sta. Lucia in 1987 proved to be Cosino's last hurrah in semi-pro basketball as two years later he would find himself on Saipan, rekindling his love affair with the sport.

ONE REGRET

While he would not swap what turned out to be a good and happy life on Saipan for the riches of professional basketball, Cosino said one thing that he does regret was not finishing college.

"Long-term work on Saipan and raising a family that is well provided for is good enough for me. I also heard that some of my contemporaries are struggling. So I'm really happy where I am right now. One regret, though, is not finishing college despite getting it for free since I was on a scholarship," he said.

Which is why Cosino is proud that his two eldest sons have already finished college and now have good jobs in the Philippines.

Cosino and his lovely wife, Rowena, have five children. Two were born in the Philippines and three were born on Saipan.

Their eldest, 22-year-old Tristan, is a business management graduate from Far Eastern University, while Terrence, 21, recently finished his accounting degree from the same school.

"I told my kids if you want to play basketball professionally then do it, but don't forget your studies. Basketball is only temporary."

Cosino's other children who live with him and his wife on Saipan are Troy, 16; Tyrone, 8; and Trixie, 3.

Twenty-five years after rolling the dice and coming to Saipan, Cosino is at peace and content, home on this little speck of rock in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

"I now consider Saipan my second home. Even if we get improved status, we will still stay here. We will probably only go to the U.S. mainland for vacation or to visit family and friends."

Ed Cosino in the Degree jersey he donned during last season's UFO-Masters caging. Left photo, Cosino poses while suiting up for Crispa Lhuillier in the PABL 1987 season.

MARK RABAGO

IAN MORRELL

FARMER BOYS
sports lessons from a pig farm

JIM RAYPHAND
Contributing Writer

Ask most adults who lived any part of their childhood on a farm and they will likely share how much they "hated taking care of the animals…every single day: feed, water, and shovel crap"—they might say before breaking into a smile.

Delve a little deeper and they, more often than not, will begin to recall a happier, simpler time in their lives. They might espouse further about how much they appreciated the hard work and general experience or how those countless hours of backbreaking, manure-infested chores actually taught them something. You see, contrary to popular belief, an easy life is not necessarily a better one. Put another way, the harder you work for something, the more likely you are to appreciate it—and life is no exception.

For young brothers Roman, 14, Noah, 14, and Keikoa, 8, farm work is the order of every day. With a strict Old Man, they do more on any given day than most kids their age do in a month, including but not limited to the daily grind of assisting in the care of a 40-plus brood of swine. To their credit, I have yet to see any display of the disgruntled teenage syndrome as is so common among today's pansy, air-con babies. In fact, unless they're just great actors, they seem to have found the joy that comes with a regular day's sweat. Maybe they too have learned that, "Throughout the entire history of the world, nobody has ever been known to die from drowning in his own sweat" (Unknown). Perhaps they know already what the late, great Vince Lombardi once said: "The dictionary is the only place that success comes before work" or that "Nothing will work unless you do," per the great John Wooden.

IAN MORRELL

LEFT: Roman waters the pigs at their pig farm. **ABOVE:** Koa lifts a bucket of slop as he prepares to feed the pigs. **BELOW:** Noah enters the pigpen, carrying a bucket of slop.

Whatever the case and whether they know it or not, every day spent sweating on the farm is another day spent nurturing the single most important ingredient for achieving greatness (on the athletic fields and in life)—a personal work ethic. That sounds dramatic, I know, but I don't think it's exaggerated. The life of an animal farmer is one of a daily grind of heavy lifting, redundant movements, and general physicality similar only to that of an athlete (except that there are no days off for a farmer). If you don't believe me, try comparing health indicators for young farmers like Roman and his brothers with those of same-aged kids who spend their days playing video games—and while you're at it, compare notes on any tangible outcomes between the two groups. Let me know what you find.

Given a choice between talent and a strong work ethic, most coaches will likely choose the latter. Skills can be taught but the will to work hard comes from a deeper sense of self, a thing from a person's upbringing, and the thing of farmer boys and girls—much harder to teach, if you ask me.

I suspect that I am not alone in thinking this, but boy what I would give to be 14 again knowing even half of what I know now. I couldn't even begin to tell you what my high score was on Space Invaders or Pacman, but I can almost taste the sugary sweet ice-cups I got as payment for mowing lawns and I can definitely still feel the simple pats on the back for a job well done. Some of the best, most lasting rewards (no matter how small) really are those earned on the strength of your own back and sweat of your own brow. And, "Sometimes the greatest thing to come out of all your hard work isn't what you get for it, but what you become for it" (Ruskin). TS

IAN MORRELL

FASTFACTS

Some quirky, interesting, health/sports-related facts about pigs (elicited from The Old Farmer's Almanac - http://www.almanac.com/content/all-right-reasons-raise-pigs)

- 'Pigskin' (the traditional covering of a football) is one of the toughest and most useful of animal hides, yet a pig's skin is extremely sensitive to temperature and injury.
- Some breeds of pigs grow ferocious-looking tusks yet dine primarily on roots and vegetables.
- The fastest member of the pig family is the warthog, which can reach speeds of 35 mph.
- Though "pigging out" is synonymous with gluttony, the stomach of a pig is proportionately much smaller than that of a sheep or a cow.
- The pig has cloven hooves—an adaptation shared with flighty prey animals like the sheep, deer, and antelope—yet no barnyard animal displays as much swagger or is less afraid.
- Looking for how to find out how much your pig weighs? Measure its girth (in inches) by wrapping a tape measure around the animal just behind the front legs. Then measure the length from the ears to the base of the tail. The pig's weight (in pounds) will be equal to the square of the girth, times the length, divided by 400.

ROSELYNMONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

switchinggears

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Coach Keith Nabors, standing fifth from left, poses with members of the Tinian High School Stallions after their victory in the MISO caging in 2012 at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Keith King-Nabors' story is no different from other tales of a promising collegiate football career abruptly ended by an injury. However, what makes his more inspiring is how he recovered from one setback to another and earned success in not one but three sports.

"In 2002, I was offered an opportunity to play college football at Santa Monica College. It was awesome just being in the collegiate league and seeing future NFL stars and alumni. I started on the defensive line as a technique defensive tackle, but three games before my first season ended, I partially tore my patella tendon (right knee) so I was not cleared to play until after rehab," said Nabors, who returned to Tinian in late 2003.

Despite the career-ending injury, he continued to play football, suiting up for the Tinian Typhoons in the then-Commonwealth Football League where he earlier took two Defensive Player of the Year awards before accepting a scholarship at Santa Monica College. His team made it into the CFL playoffs in December 2004 but, instead of celebrating the holidays and the Typhoons feat, he had to check in at a hospital in the Philippines after re-injuring his knee during a playoff game. Nabors eventually underwent reconstructive knee surgery and said goodbye to football.

Sneaking into a bear trap

After the surgery, Nabors returned to Tinian and though he was coming off back-to-back setbacks and undergoing rehabilitation, he tried coaching Little League.

"It was like going through a bear trap," said Nabors, who played baseball way back in his elementary days in Portland, Oregon, but did not have coaching experience. "I said that because I have a fledgling team [Typhoon] that everyone beats on like a drum. However, when I saw the confidence of those little kids, I started to build esteem, too, and that's when I got hooked into Little League."

From being the league's favorite whipping boys, Nabors managed to turn his players into one of the contenders. The Typhoons, which then only had one Little League team, grew and now has three more squads: Junior, Senior, and Big League. Several players from Nabors' stable also became members of the Tinian All-Stars and gave Saipan a run for their money in the annual CNMI District Tournament, a qualifier for the Asia-Pacific Regional Championships.

Basketball, MMA

When not coaching Little League, the son of Tinian's first congresswoman Serafina King-Nabors and former lawyer William B. Nabors is calling the shots for the Stallions, the back-to-back champion of the MISO varsity caging, and helping Tinian MMA fighters.

"There was a group of seven boys who competed in one of Cuki Alvarez's event and they were training next door to my house. So on off days I would go over and help them out with the little bit of knowledge of MMA that I had at that time. Then I started taking Gracie Barra Academy courses online and my knowledge grew more. Cuki and a couple of guys eventually came down to Tinian and helped us out with some techniques and donated some money for equipment. It was actually Josh Castro who helped bring Cuki down and set the whole thing up," said Nabors, who later switched to officiating MMA bouts.

"From time to time, Cuki and the Trench Tech guys, Frank Camacho, and Josh Castro would come down and help the guys, teaching them new tricks and also doing some community service around the island. So I have left the training to them and started focusing on refereeing. I am currently certified by the Gracie Barra Academy to judge and referee fights. This summer I will be going to Big John McCarthy's training center in California to get certified to do larger events like One Fighting Championship," the proud father of four said.

No regrets

If not for that fateful injury, Nabors would have gone places but he has no regrets, as he experienced what it was like to play in a bigger field.

"I didn't give up on my dream of becoming a professional football player, it just wasn't my time. God had bigger plans for me. I have no regrets. I went there and tried, but the stars were not aligned in my favor," Nabors said.

As an athlete, he has already achieved several goals. He was a member of the CNMI Men's National Basketball Team that won four games (the most for a CNMI squad) in the 1999 South Pacific Games in Guam and played for the fabled Ol'Aces squad that was a force to reckon with in the Budweiser League. The Community Guidance Center's Prevention Coordinator also suited up for the Tinian High School team that won two championships in flag football on Saipan and represented the CNMI at the Oceania Junior Track & Field Championships (shotput and discus).

"It was held in Australia and was one of the best experiences of my life. It was basically competing against athletes who are going to the Olympics and placing sixth out of 25 competitors was huge for me," Nabors said.

Now that he is done chasing his dreams, he wants to help others complete theirs and make a difference in their lives.

"I love seeing my son [KeShaun] go from being the little kid that get struck out every at bat to becoming the batting champ. I love the challenge of game planning. I love putting together scouting reports and reviewing films," said Nabors, who thanks his wife, Joyce, for supporting his endeavors.

It gives this Jones Beach resident no greater pride than seeing players he coached get more and better opportunities.

"I coached kids who are now Army Ranger instructors and one who now works at the White House. I also have athletes that are now coaching in the program [Little League]," he said.

Nabors vows to continue coaching and wishes more CNMI athletes, especially from Tinian, to get scholarships in college.

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